



# Community Group Discussion Guide

February 9, 2025

1 Samuel 22: 6-23 | The Divide

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## MOTIVATE

### Starter Question

- ⇒ Describe a personal experience in which you were asked to do something against your beliefs. How did you handle it? Were there repercussions?
- ⇒ Or describe a historical event in which Christians suffered for their faith.

## DISCUSS

David's life as a refugee continued with David hiding in the forest of Hereth with his men. David was on the run after Saul made several attempts on his life. In 1 Samuel 21, David faced danger, difficulty, and isolation, but God strengthened him spiritually. (See *1 Samuel Overview* for additional information.)

In 1 Samuel 22:6-23, the narrator describes how Saul's single-mindedness to destroy David began to affect his kingdom. The narrator continues juxtaposing David and Saul with their differences growing larger in each chapter. Saul seemed to utilize every privilege of power in 1 Samuel 22, but his growing paranoia and violence actually served to weaken his authority. Centered around one of the most tragic stories in the Old Testament, the narrator highlights that even amid unfathomable evil, God's Word will always come true in the end.

- ⇒ **Why is there great hope in the truth that God's Word will always come true? Can you give a personal example from your own life?**

**1 Samuel 22:6-8** Now Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men who were with him. Saul was sitting at Gibeah under the tamarisk tree on the height with his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing about him. **7** And Saul said to his servants who stood about him, "Hear now, people of Benjamin; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, **8** that all of you have conspired against me? No one discloses to me when my son makes a covenant with the son of Jesse. None of you is sorry for me or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day."

Saul was holding court under a tamarisk tree in his capital city of Gibeah. Located 5-6 miles north of Jerusalem. Gibeah means "a hill." In an elevated position, Saul sat with his spear in his hand--an ever-present reminder of his power and his tendency toward violence. From this position of dominance, Saul questioned the loyalty of his officials and servants.

Saul's paranoia led him to believe his inner circle had joined David and Jonathan to conspire against him. There was no evidence David or Jonathan plotted to kill Saul, yet he thought they were lying in wait for him. There was no evidence that anyone in his court had turned against him, yet Saul attempted to manipulate them for information on David by dangling prosperity and promotions in front of them.

Saul used the phrase "son of Jesse" as an insult, reminding the people that David came from a humble background and was not from his kingly, Benjamite line. The bribes, insults, and questions demonstrated that despite the power that came with being king, Saul was powerless to stop David since God was on his side.

- ⇒ **What message was Saul trying to convey to his servants and court? Why does "son of Jesse" mean something different to us than the way Saul intended?**

**1 Samuel 22:9-10** Then answered Doeg the Edomite, who stood by the servants of Saul, “I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, **10** and he inquired of the LORD for him and gave him provisions and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine.”

Nearby Saul’s court session, standing with the king’s servants, was Doeg the Edomite (descendants of Esau). Doeg was mentioned briefly in 1 Samuel 21:7 when David saw him while talking with the priest at Nob. Doeg, a foreigner serving at court, was Saul’s chief herdsman but not likely in Saul’s inner circle. However, Doeg used this moment to create a name for himself and gain favor with Saul.

Although Doeg did not outright lie about David in Nob, he used inflammatory language to make it seem like David and the priest, Ahimelech, were in cahoots against Saul. Doeg stated that Ahimelech gave David provisions for a journey along with Goliath’s sword. Doeg implied that Ahimelech inquired of the Lord on David’s behalf, meaning he used his priestly position for divine answers from God. Doeg essentially told Saul that David was preparing for battle.

- ⇒ ***What motivation can we assume Doeg had at this moment?***
- ⇒ ***What did Saul’s words, his servants’ lack of response, and his willingness to trust a non-Israelite convey about his inner state?***

**1 Samuel 22:11-15:** Then the king sent to summon Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father’s house, the priests who were at Nob, and all of them came to the king. **12** And Saul said, “Hear now, son of Ahitub.” And he answered, “Here I am, my lord.” **13** And Saul said to him, “Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, in that you have given him bread and a sword and have inquired of God for him, so that he has risen against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?” **14** Then Ahimelech answered the king, “And who among all your servants is so faithful as David, who is the king’s son-in-law, and captain over your bodyguard, and honored in your house? **15** Is today the first time that I have inquired of God for him? No! Let not the king impute anything to his servant or to all the house of my father, for your servant has known nothing of all this, much or little.”

When Saul heard this, he ordered Ahimelech and all the priests at Nob to appear before him at court. Nob was only a couple of miles from Gibeath, so it did not take long for them to reach Saul. He focused on Ahimelech, refusing to call him by his name, instead calling him “son of Ahitub.” Ahimelech means, “brother of the king,” but it is clear Saul did not have any brotherly feelings toward him.

Saul presented four charges against Ahimelech: giving David bread, providing him with a weapon, inquiring of God for him, and conspiring with David to kill him. Ahimelech did not deny helping David, but he declared that he was innocent of any wrongdoing. The basis of Ahimelech’s defense was that he had no reason to suspect David of treachery, as David was Saul’s faithful servant, part of the king’s family, and a respected member of Saul’s court. Ahimelech admitted that he had inquired of God for David before, although this was not explicitly stated in 1 Samuel 21.

To truly “inquire of God” meant for the priest to wear the ephod, a priestly garment associated with hearing from God and seeking a divine answer to a question (Exodus 28). This was not a quick process, as wearing the ephod required purification, and hearing from God by casting lots was not a guarantee. Since David approached Nob in haste, it is unlikely that Ahimelech inquired of God at this time. The assumption is that Ahimelech had sought God’s direction regarding David in the past and therefore did not deny Saul’s accusation. However, Ahimelech declared he had nothing to do with conspiring against Saul.

- ⇒ ***Compare Saul’s accusation to Ahimelech’s defense. What do their words reveal about their hearts?***
- ⇒ ***1 Samuel 21 does not say that Ahimelech inquired of God for David, yet Ahimelech admitted to having done this several times. What does it mean to “inquire of God” and why would he do this?***
- ⇒ ***How do we inquire of God today?***

**1 Samuel 22:16-19** *And the king said, “You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father’s house.” 17 And the king said to the guard who stood about him, “Turn and kill the priests of the LORD, because their hand also is with David, and they knew that he fled and did not disclose it to me.” But the servants of the king would not put out their hand to strike the priests of the LORD. 18 Then the king said to Doeg, “You turn and strike the priests.” And Doeg the Edomite turned and struck down the priests, and he killed on that day eighty-five persons who wore the linen ephod. 19 And Nob, the city of the priests, he put to the sword; both man and woman, child and infant, ox, donkey and sheep, he put to the sword.*

- ⇒ **What message did Saul’s actions convey? Why was his judgment here especially wicked?**
- ⇒ **Read 1 Samuel 8:10-18. How did Saul fulfill the warning Samuel gave the people?**

**1 Samuel 22:20-23** *But one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David. 21 And Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the priests of the Lord. 22 And David said to Abiathar, “I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have occasioned the death of all the persons of your father’s house. 23 Stay with me; do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life. With me you shall be in safekeeping.”*

By God’s grace, Abiathar, one of the sons of Ahimelech, survived the massacre. The original translation says, “Abiathar fled to David with a view to following after him,” meaning that Abiathar intended to join David’s company of men. Abiathar told David that Saul had slaughtered the priests, an act for which David claimed responsibility. Why would David take the blame?

In Psalm 52, David described Doeg as destructive, deceitful, and evil. It’s likely that as a member of Saul’s household, David had interactions with Doeg before and knew his character. Despite Doeg and Saul ultimately being responsible for the death of the people, David believed he was accountable for not doing anything to stop Doeg in Nob. David requested that Abiathar stay with him and promised to protect him. This loyalty to David moved the priesthood under David, and Abiathar remained his priest until David’s death.

- ⇒ **What does David’s response to Abiathar reveal about his heart?**
- ⇒ **Read Psalm 52:1-9. How do we see David trusting in the steadfast love of God during this season?**

The divide between David and Saul continued to escalate as the story progresses. as David grew in God-like character while Saul’s evil heart continued to darken. 1 Samuel 23 ends with a stark comparison:

- Saul with innocent blood on his hands, trusting a foreign herdsman to carry out his commands, descending into more wickedness as he rebels against the Lord.
  - David with over 400 fighting men, a prophet on his side, the priesthood officially under him, and ultimately God’s favor on him as he prepares to be king.
- ⇒ **On the surface this section seems more like a history book, just moving the story forward with no lessons or application, but we know that all of God’s Word is inspired and beneficial for us. How does this chapter reveal a need for a Savior? Where do you see Jesus and His grace contained in this narrative?**

## TRANSFORM

**1. Make personal application:** Most of us will not commit violent crimes as Saul did, but as we examine Saul, we need to remember two things. First, Saul did not start blatantly wicked. Unrepentant sin and a rebellious attitude toward God grew into wickedness. Secondly, all sin is equal in the eyes of God. Jesus reminds us in Matthew 5:22 that having anger in your heart is the same as murder.

- ⇒ **How do you see yourself represented through Saul?**

⇒ ***Do you tend to harden your heart like Saul when confronted with sin? What would help you to humble yourself before the Lord?***

When we examine David's life we should be reminded of our perfect King, Jesus. David's group of followers was comprised of the downtrodden and the outcasts, similar to those who were drawn to Jesus (1 Samuel 22:2; Matthew 11:28). David accepted the blame for the priest's deaths, Jesus accepted the blame for our sins (1 Samuel 22:22; 2 Corinthians 5:21). David left revenge up to God alone, Jesus left revenge to God (Psalm 52:9; Matthew 5:38-39). David rested in God's love, and Jesus rested in God's love (Psalm 52:8; John 15:10).

As we examine our own life, we should first consider that while we might think a particular sin is "small," sin always has a negative impact, especially unrepentant sin. Our actions might not be the same, but our hearts are just as sinful as Saul's, and we need a savior to the same degree. Secondly, we should examine if we are actually living like Jesus is King over our lives. Do our thoughts and actions show that we are waiting on Him and trusting in His steadfast love? Lastly, we should praise God that all the goodness found in Jesus is ours through the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus.

⇒ ***How can we find comfort in Jesus being the good and better version of David?***

⇒ ***How can you wait upon the Lord and rest in His love this week?***

**2. Pray:** Begin by thanking the Lord for His Word that reveals our nature and teaches us His character. Ask God to reveal any unrepentant sin in your heart. Confess sins that may seem small and ask God for forgiveness for how your sin grieves His heart. Admit your dependence on the Holy Spirit to produce fruit in your life. Thank God for His love and forgiveness. Ask Him to help you wait upon Him and to rest in His love.

## STUDY

### Resources used, compiled from, and quoted:

- *English Standard Version Expository Commentary: 1 Samuel-2 Chronicles (2019), pg 197, 218, 221-228.*
- *English Standard Version Study Bible (2008), pg 557, 592-595.*
- *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary (2015), pg 500-501, 639-640, 738-739, 1166-1167, 162.4*
- *Holman Old Testament Commentary I & II Samuel (2009), pg 159-162.*
- *New International Version Application Commentary I & II Samuel (2021), pg 311-316.*
- *New International Version Life Application Study Bible (1997) pg 476.*
- *Wiersbe Old Testament Bible Commentary (2007), pg 531-533.*